



September 2002

Volume 3, Issue 3

Salmon Savers: Tony Meyer

“Salmon Savers” is a new, ongoing feature that profiles individuals who are making significant contributions to salmon recovery in our region.



A man who's not afraid to get his feet wet.

Quote: *“Being able to see changes that you make and having fish occupy the habitat that you created where there was no habitat before is the best feeling in the world.”*

– **Tony Meyer**

Occupation: Program coordinator for Lower Columbia Fish Enhancement Group. LCFEG works with individuals and organizations on salmon enhancement/habitat restoration projects on Washington state tributaries of the Columbia River below Bonneville Dam.

Tony's thoughts on salmon recovery: Too few projects are being implemented on the ground pending paperwork and seemingly endless studies. Although scientists talk about restoring natural watershed processes, it's unlikely that watersheds in Clark County will function the way they once did. The best hope for salmon recovery in our region is for state and local government to buy up the

headwaters of the most important watersheds such as Cedar Creek, Rock Creek, and the Little Washougal, to preserve the water quality.

Accomplishment he's most proud of: Tony believes that getting people *involved* with fish, especially kids, is the best way to protect the resource. So he seized the chance to implement a habitat restoration project behind Cape Horn Elementary School in Washougal, which helped to focus the involvement of the local community.

The project, which he proposed to the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife, entailed restoring riparian areas along 5000 feet of Schoolhouse Creek. The banks were cleared of Himalayan blackberry and Scotch broom and replanted with native shrubs and trees. In-stream work included removing culverts, creating a fish ladder, adding large woody debris, and creating six different pools and ponds that added nearly a million cubic feet of spawning and rearing habitat for salmonids.

A goal of the project is to introduce and build up self-sustaining populations of coho. If successful, this would become the prototype for building up native fish stocks in other areas. Another goal is to generate enthusiasm for fish among school children by letting them monitor the progress of this project through all its stages, as habitat restoration progresses and as the coho population increases.

Surprising fact about Tony: You wouldn't know it from talking to him, but Tony has no formal education in fish issues. He channeled his passion for fish into avidly reading books about salmon and joining and forming fish conservation groups. ☼

Lots of fish!

Last summer's drought and energy crisis had many predicting the worst for salmon. The Bonneville Power Administration released only 20 percent as much water as it normally releases over spillways to help juvenile salmon avoid hazardous turbines. BPA officials said the water was needed to meet electricity demands.

But there's good news. According to a recent *Oregonian* article, this summer's high number of returning jacks – male salmon that return to spawn after just a year at sea – is a reliable indicator that the number of returning salmon and steelhead in 2003 will be well above the average for the 1990s.

The surprisingly high jack count may be partly the result of aggressive barging of juvenile salmon from hatcheries to the ocean. Favorable ocean conditions are another factor. Cold upwellings have continued to push nutrients from the ocean floor to the surface, where they feed the marine life that salmon eat.

Fish biologists estimate that 250,000 to 300,000 spring and summer chinook will pass Bonneville Dam in 2003.

On a related matter, Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife officials reported that 142,000 adult fall chinook were counted at Bonneville Dam during August, an all-time record for the month. ☼

Survey Results

Thanks to those of you who responded to our recent ESA Newsletter survey. Of the nearly 80 responses we received, 74% of respondents say they read the newsletter thoroughly, 26% scan it, and 93% find it either very or somewhat useful. Positive comments outnumbered negative ones by a large margin. Some comments canceled each other out, i.e., equal numbers in favor of or against a certain feature such as gardening tips or calendar listings. Based on feedback from several readers, we are now making more of an effort to emphasize local news.

Locals weigh in on dredging issue

During the summer, the Army Corps of Engineers conducted a series of public hearings across the region to allow local communities to express their opinions on the Corps' plans to deepen the Columbia River's shipping channel from 40 to 43 feet. One of these hearings took place at the Water Resources Education Center in Vancouver. Most of the business and community leaders who testified argued that dredging is essential to the local economy. Vancouver Mayor Royce Pollard said our region cannot be successful without the necessary infrastructure. Brad Clark, with the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, said 59,000 Northwest jobs depend on this project.

Others commented on the need to keep our ports competitive and viable for commerce and national

defense, and described channel deepening as a bright spot in our current recession. "Economic prosperity enables us to address environmental concerns" said one man, while another argued that it would be a critical mistake to wait any longer.

Although outnumbered by dredging proponents, a few people denounced dredging. Peter Huhtala with the Columbia Deepening Opposition Group argued in favor of protecting salmon habitat and said the big winners will be foreign shipping companies and the big losers will be commercial fishermen, tribes, and the environment.

The National Marine Fisheries Service (now called NOAA Fisheries) recently reaffirmed its earlier biological opinion and says that dredging will have no adverse short-term impact on salmon. ☼

Fish at what cost?

Nobody said saving fish was cheap. The General Accounting Office estimates that \$3.3 billion was

spent by federal agencies between 1982 and 2001 to help fish in the Columbia and its tributaries. But the

Bonneville Power Administration puts the figure at over \$6 billion, claiming the GAO's estimate didn't take into account the water spilled over dams for fish that could have been used to generate electricity in the Pacific Northwest.

The cost is high, whichever figure you choose. While some will criticize the amount that's been spent and cite waste, others believe that the money has not been spent in vain, but has laid the

foundation for important work currently underway to save fish.

In light of these cost estimates, it's also worth considering the economic benefits of salmon as well as the high price of losing the fish. In addition to the significant cultural and spiritual value of salmon to the Pacific Northwest, the economic value of commercial and sports fishing and related jobs is considerable. ☼

What's Clark County's ESA Program up to?

Because salmon recovery is a long-term process, the county's ESA Program is focused on several long-term projects. Here's a progress update:

- ❑ We are working with the Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board to produce a salmon recovery plan draft by next year. This plan will serve as a template for local jurisdictions and will meet federal expectations for ESA compliance.

- ❑ By comparing Clark County's critical areas ordinances and land use regulations to the standards identified by NOAA Fisheries in the 4(d) rule, we are identifying any changes necessary to achieve 4(d) compliance.

- ❑ Through watershed planning efforts, we will eventually match county programs and regulatory requirements to the unique environmental processes at work within each watershed.

- ❑ Key education efforts include the Sammy Awards, speakers bureau presentations, a regional ad campaign, updated printed and electronic materials, an ESA newsletter, and a county fair booth. We are also working with Clark County Environmental Services to address water quality issues related to car washing, and are working with nurseries to stock salmon-friendly gardening brochures in their stores.

- ❑ We are working with the county's Community Development department to consolidate county ordinances and to incorporate salmon-friendly language into the Comprehensive Plan update.

- ❑ We are exploring incentives for landowners with important fish habitat to write, record, and implement stewardship plans on their land. For more information, contact Joel Rupley at 397-2022. ☼

Federal plan still protects wild salmon

In September 2001, Judge Michael Hogan ordered Oregon coastal coho salmon to be removed from the Endangered Species list. He ruled that the National Marine Fisheries Service (now called NOAA Fisheries) had acted "capriciously" by including hatchery fish along with wild fish in the listed population of fish, but giving protection only to the wild fish.

That ruling prompted NOAA Fisheries to do some soul-searching about the ability of salmon to be self-sustaining in its natural ecosystem. Now, NOAA Fisheries has just issued a draft proposal to Northwest states and tribes (see <http://www.nwr.noaa.gov/HatcheryListingPolicy/HatcheryListingPolicy.html>) that says a population of salmon should be listed as threatened or

endangered if its natural ecosystem is unable to support it in the long term—no matter how large the hatchery runs are. The proposal cheered conservationists, who had feared a delisting of many West Coast salmonid stocks.

Significantly, NOAA Fisheries now says hatcheries can play a role in rebuilding naturally spawning stocks if they produce fish that have more characteristics of the naturally spawning salmon. The previous policy generally assumed that hatcheries were a factor of decline.

After states and tribes and other agencies comment on the draft, another draft will be released sometime this fall for public comment. ☼

Restrictions on Pacific Ocean fishing

Salmon aren't the only fish in trouble. The Pacific Fishery Management Council has just announced drastic reductions in the allowable harvest of four West Coast rockfish species next year off the Pacific coast from Canada to Mexico. Over-harvest has depleted the numbers of these fish beyond sustainable levels. While the news is grim for the

fishing industry (and for those who enjoy eating red snapper), if over-fishing continues, the fish would disappear altogether – which would also be bad news for the fishing industry. Better to recover the fish, which can live to be 80 years old and reproduce slowly. ☹

Calendar Highlights, October – December

Oct. 2-5, River and Watershed Restoration, Portland.
Contact: (503) 725-5117 or bolson@irn.pdx.edu

October 2, November 5, December 4, ESA Advisory Committee Meeting, Vancouver Contact John Tyler at 360-397-2232 or john.tyler@clark.wa.gov.

Oct 3, Oct 5, Water Quality Monitoring Training, Brush Prairie. Contact Gary Bock at 397-6060 ext. 7703 or gary.bock@clark.wa.gov

October 5, 12, 19, "What has the Columbia River Watershed Done for You Today?" Bonneville Lock and Dam. For details call 541-374-8820.

October 5, Build-A-Stream, Tualatin Hills Nature Park, Tualatin. E-mail bbarbarasch@thprd.com or call 503-644-5595 for details.

October 7, Volunteer Orientation, Water Resources Education Center, Vancouver. Contact - Bev Walker (360)696-8478 ext. 8416 bev.walker@ci.vancouver.wa.us

October 12 & 13, 19th Annual Oxbow Park Salmon Festival, Oxbow Regional Park, Sandy. Call 503-797-1850 or see www.metro-region.org/parks/salmon.html.

October 13-17, "Hydrologic Extremes: Challenges For Science And Management," Portland. Visit <<http://www.aihydro.org/conference2002/index.htm>>.

October 15 - 17, Aquaguide Training, Water Resources Education Center, Vancouver. Contact Bev Walker (360)696-8478 or bev.walker@ci.vancouver.wa.us.

October 17, "Salmon Summit 2002" Bellingham, Washington. See www.whatcomcd.org/salmonrecovery/salmonrecovery.htm or call 360-715-0283.

October 17, Salmon go to School, Columbia Springs Environmental Education Center, Vancouver. Contact Tim Lichen at 546-9510 or lichen@vancouver.wsu.edu.

October 17, Fish First Membership meeting, Oak Tree Restaurant, Woodland. Contact Jody Loomis-Brentin (bjody12@hotmail.com 360-225-7797)

October 17-18, "Stream Processes and Riparian Restoration," Brookings, Oregon. Email mainstream@harborside.com or call 541-247-9881.

October 20, Guided Salmon Viewing Walk, Oxbow Regional Park, Sandy. E-mail scrivensd@metro.dst.or.us or call 503-797-1850, option 4 to register.

Food for thought...

The Earth's population increases by 217,000 people *every day*. Imagine if the salmon population increased by even a fraction of that number! ☹

October 22-25, "Northwest Salmonid Recovery Conference," Seattle, Washington. Visit www.nwetc.org/salmonid_conf_02.htm or call 206-762-1976.

October 25-26, "Bringing Water Home," Albany, Oregon. Visit www.wuw-net.org/workshop_2002.htm or email or call 541-682-5507.

November TBA, Project WET Teacher Workshop, Water Resources Education Center, Vancouver. Contact Bev Walker or Cory Samia (360)696-8478.

December 7
Friends of Trees, Neighborhood Trees Crew Leader Training, Portland. Contact Chad Honl at (503) 282-8846 x 19 or chadh@friendsoftrees.org

Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board

For meeting information, contact the LCFRB at (360)425-1555 or visit www.LCFRB.gen.wa.us.



